1· Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

221 Seasonal variation in quantity and kind of food is sociologically significant for several reasons, though not all are relevant to the present study. It is, however, important to note that abundance of millet is the main reason for holding ceremonies in the rains, for ritual is seldom complete without porridge and beer and, since it consists of sacrifice, of meat also. Weddings, initiation rites, and religious ceremonies of various kinds take place in the rains and early drought, generally after the first millet harvest. This is also the main season for [[21]] raiding the Dinka. Nuer say that hunger and war are bad companions and that they are too hungry to fight in the full dry season; and it is evident that they are then not so eager to come to blows over personal and community quarrels as they are in the rainy months, when they are replete with grain and meat and, especially at wedding dances, sometimes slightly intoxi- [[31]] cated. Nor do the young men find dancing so attractive in the drought, whereas in the rains they dance as much as possible and think nothing of travelling many miles to attend weddings, at which they dance from eventide till well into the morning. The tempo of village life is different from that of camp life. Owing to flooding at the height of the rains these joint activities take place mainly at the beginning and end—chiefly at the end —of the wet season.

264 Scarcity of food at times and the narrow margin that for
574 most of the year divides sufficiency from famine cause a high degree of interdependence among members of the smaller local groups, which may be said to have a common stock of food. Although each household owns its own food, does its own cooking, and provides independently for the needs of its members, men, and much less, women and children, eat in one another's homes to such an extent that, looked at from outside, the whole community is seen to be partaking of a joint supply. Rules of hospitality and conventions about the division of meat and fish lead to a far wider sharing of food than a bare statement of the principles of ownership would suggest. Young men eat at all byres in the vicinity; every household gives beer parties which their neighbours and kinsmen attend; the same people are given food and beer at the co-operative work parties that assist in any difficult and laborious task; in camps it is

1; Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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considered correct for men to visit the windscreens of their friends to drink milk, and a special gourd of sour milk is kept for guests; when an ox is sacrificed or a wild animal is killed the meat is always, in one way or another, widely distributed; people are expected to give part of their catch of fish to those who ask them for it; people assist one another when there is a shortage of milk or grain; and so forth. This mutual assistance and common consumption of food, which is especially evident in compact dry-season camps, belongs rather to the subject of domestic and kinship relations than to the present account. I wish here only to stress the following points: (1) This habit of share and share alike is easily understandable in a community where every one is likely to find himself in difficulties from time to time, for it is scarcity and not sufficiency that makes people generous, since everybody is thereby insured against hunger. He who is in need to-day receives help from him who may be in like need to-morrow. (2) While the greatest sharing is in the smaller domestic and kinship groups, there is also so much mutual assistance and hospitality among members of villages and camps that one may speak of a common economy of these communities, which are treated in this book as the smallest political groups in Nuerland and within which are taken for granted ties of kinship, affinity, age-sets, and so forth.

X

I have examined Nuer food-supply in relation to their oecology and I now give a brief account of their material culture in the same terms. When a Nuer is born he enters not only into a natural environment but also into a domesticated environment which is the product of human labour; and this inner world is constructed from the outer world, its form and content being strictly limited by natural resources. I am neither desirous nor capable of describing technological procedures, and to excuse myself in some degree for this omission I am including in this and in a second volume an unusually large number of plates and figures illustrating many examples of Nuer handiwork. However, some general remarks on the limiting conditions of production seem pertinent.

2;Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

476 kin. The owner of the homestead does not supervise the work, and each does as much or as little as he chooses. Apart from co-operative parties of this kind Nuer, especially the women, prefer to perform their like, but several, duties in company where this is convenient, as when women collect wild fruits or draw water, boys herd the goats and sheep, and men fish with spears in pools, lagoons, and the shallows of streams.

602 A kinsman is also expected to help another who is in need by giving him what he is in need of if he is in a position to do so. Nuer say that 'among kinsmen of every kind there is no purchase' and that 'with us Nuer, it is all giving and begging'. Also, Nuer eat so much in each other's byres and windscreens that, as far as the men are concerned, there may be said to be to some extent commensalism among the members of nearby homesteads and even between the members of a small village. Nuer keep open house and, in their summer camps especially, men visit one another so regularly to drink milk together that an older man does not care to drink milk alone but sends a small boy to invite an age-mate to share his gourd with him. Nuer readily lend milch cows to families with small children and make gifts of millet and fish to those in need. When animals are sacrificed the meat is generally the right of a family, or of a family and their close kin, but neighbours often receive meat if they ask for it persistently enough, for it is not thought mean to refuse. On some occasions a beast belongs to whoever can seize meat from it, but on such occasions men of the same household assist one another, and as those taking part in the scrimmage are all kith and kin a sense of fairness prevails. In general it may be said that no one in a Nuer village starves unless all are starving. The food supply of a community is ultimately at the disposal of all its members within whose corporate life each family has security to pursue its particular interests and to satisfy its most elementary needs.

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II

121 Though I did not study in detail relations within the Nuer family, I could not have avoided reaching some general conclusions about them, and I set these down here in so far as they relate to the kinship system and the life of the wider society, the values of which, reflected in modes of address, are assimilated to those obtaining within the family.

4: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1948 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

NUER MARRIAGE CEREMONIES[1]

E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD

MARRIAGE among the Nuer is brought about by payment of bridewealth and by the performance of certain ceremonial rites. The rites cannot take place without the payments, but transfers of cattle do not by themselves bring about the union. Both are necessary and they proceed in a connected movement towards the full establishment of the union. Each enforces and reinforces the other. The bride's people can, by holding up the rites, put pressure on the bridegroom's people to make the payments due to them, and the bridegroom's people can, by withholding the cattle, induce the girl's family and kin to advance the ceremonies. First one pedal is pressed down and then the other as the marriage is propelled to its appointed end, the birth of children and the sharing of a home. It is understood that payments should have reached a certain point before a certain rite is held, and the performance of the rite is a recognition of the transfer of cattle up to that point. Payments of cattle and marriage rites therefore tend to alternate, though there is no fixity about the alternation and no marriage is exactly the same as another in this respect. The new social ties of conjugality and affinity are made stronger by each payment and by each ceremony, so that a marriage which is insecure at the beginning of the negotiations becomes surer with every new payment and rite; both sides, by the giving and receiving of cattle and by joint participation in the rites, becoming more deeply committed to bringing about the union. Therefore a marriage which has reached the final rites may be regarded as a stable union and will generally prove to be so.

Some General Features of the Ceremonies

The chief ceremonies are the *larieng*, the *ngut*, and the *mut*: the betrothal, the wedding, and the consummation. All three are important public events in Nuer life, though the betrothal rites are not held on so large a scale to the west of the Nile as to the east. Preparations for them are made days, even weeks, ahead, and they are talked about, especially by the young people, long before they take place. They are usually held in the rains, for there is then plenty of millet for porridge and beer, and people have the energy of the well-fed and can travel long distances without fatigue and dance and make love with equal vigour. A whole district attends them, young men thinking nothing of walking over ten miles to take part in the dancing, the mere coming together of so many people making marriage a memorable event. Neighbours thus bear witness to the creation of the new social ties and by their presence sanction them.

Neighbours form the crowd at marriage feasts. They have no direct concern with the union. Apart from these people who attend the ceremonies for dancing and

[1] This description of marriage ceremonies which I have seen, some of them many times, when living among the Nuer of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, is part of a general account of Nuer marriage, some sections of which have already been published. *Some Aspects of Marriage and the Family among the Nuer*, Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1945 (first published in 1938 in the *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft*); and 'Nuer Bridewealth', *Africa*, vol. xvi, no. 4, 1946. The sociological and political background is given in *The Nuer*, Clarendon Press, 1940.

4: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1948 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

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flirting and for the general sociability and excitement, are those who attend them for more serious purposes. It will be seen from this paper that there are always, besides prolonged discussions about bridewealth, sacrifices, and other rites which have to be performed and which interest only some of the people present—the families and kin of the bride and bridegroom. These are the rites which express the relations between husband and wife, husband's kin and wife's kin, and between the kin on one side or the other and the ghosts and spirits of their lineage. Those who stand outside these relationships are only spectators and very often pay no attention to the rites at all. It is the dance which gives to the ceremonies their popularity and publicity; it is the rites which express and bring about their purpose.

An essential rite in the marriage ceremonies is the sacrifice of a beast to the ghosts and spirits by which they are made cognizant, and witnesses, of the union in an address delivered to them before the beast is slain. This part of the rite concerns only the close kin of the bride or bridegroom and the address is sometimes spoken in so low a tone that it is almost inaudible amid the general clamour. People chat and shout to each other about affairs which have no connexion with the marriage, or interpolate comments into the address, a long rambling speech which may refer to almost anything which interests the speaker so long as he mentions the object of the rite and puts into it now and again some traditional phrases. The young people are dancing, the women engaged in household tasks, and it is the older men, mostly kinsmen of the bride and bridegroom, who gather round to watch the sacrifice, which to them is just one of the phases of the ceremony, like the bridewealth talks and the beer-drinking, and does not entail any special attitude on their part. The sacrifice also is often a great confusion, everyone shouting advice and instructions to everyone else and arguing good-humouredly about the division of the meat. The specifically religious part of a ceremony seems to be lost amid all the talk and movement, but it is none the less the core of the ceremony, what occasions it and gives it meaning.

Even the kinsmen of the bride or bridegroom, as the case may be, attend the sacrifice largely because it is the prelude to a division of meat, for though the ox is dedicated to the ghosts and spirits, its material destiny is to be eaten by the kin of one partner to the marriage, who, being guests, have to be provided with meat by the kin of the other partner. The people who sacrifice the beast, usually an ox, eat very little of it. They are interested in the religious part of the rite since it is their ancestors and spirits to whom the beast is dedicated. The visitors are not concerned with the ghosts and spirits of the other party but are interested in the meat which is their due, to each kinsman his customary portion. A sacrifice is thus a distribution of gifts of meat by the kin of one of the spouses to the kin of the other.

One notices the same lack of formality in the order of the rites, and the sequence of their parts, as in the performance of them. The place of each movement is determined only by the logic of necessity. An ox has to be pegged before it can be speared and it has to be skinned before it can be cut up and cooked. Otherwise there is merely a usual time for acts to be done, though it would not matter if they were done at a different time or in a different order. For example, it is usual to sacrifice an ox at the betrothal ceremony towards the end of the evening dance, but it can equally well be done on the following morning. Nuer ritual procedure is generally happy-go-lucky.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

586 bearing no children; or she is all of these things. By far the most important consideration, however, is her function in producing male children to further the name of the husband's lineage, or female children to bring to them cattle in the form of bridewealth—in itself a means of marrying women into the group and therefore producing more children to the name of the lineage. It is her function in furthering the continuity of the kinship group in posterity which concerns her husband's kinsmen most acutely.

The reasons given by the husband as grounds for divorce, or the reasons which make him wish for a divorce, are less cogent than those which must be produced by a wife to convince her family that life with her husband is no longer bearable. Her family have in a sense much more to lose, for they must return the bridewealth cattle, and it often happens that they will not receive so many on her remarriage, especially if she has a reputation for barrenness or for being a shrew. In these circumstances they will resist the demands of the wife for dissolution of marriage as much as they can. The grounds for divorce which will receive the support of a wife's family are as follows:

(i) *Impotence or Sterility of the Husband.* A woman may divorce her husband if she bears no children and it is known that her husband, a man of virile years, is impotent. In such a situation her family will usually acknowledge her plea for a divorce and allow her to marry elsewhere, even though her husband has paid a very satisfactory bridewealth for her. If, however, the husband is an old man of failing physical powers they have probably arranged the marriage out of greed for his cattle or the desire for a useful political alliance, which is an important consideration, and may use force to compel her to stay with her husband. But in most cases of this sort the husband will allow his wife to take a lover and will be glad if she begets children by this means, for the children are legally his own.

• [574] (ii) *Stinginess.* Stinginess is sometimes cited as grounds for divorce. The husband may resent his wife's hospitality to her friends and neighbours, and meanness of this sort is considered particularly reprehensible by the Nuer. What is really meant by this, however, is that the husband is stingy in the giving of those small items—food, tobacco, presents of spears and so on—which his wife's people expect. These are not legal rights but obligations inherent in the marital relationship, and they symbolize the respect he should have for all his wife's relatives.

(iii) *Failure to support the Wife.* If the husband fails to fulfil his economic duties towards his wife and children; if he is too lazy to cultivate, too lazy or weak to hunt or fish, or too poor in cattle to provide sufficient milk, her family may seek a divorce. A husband, however, who is poor in cattle may make up for the deficiency by industrious cultivation, hunting, and fishing.

9:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1936 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

wives of men of other age-sets may one day become his mother-in-law. I have never heard it suggested that men have any sexual rights over wives of their age-mates and Nuer were always shocked at my enquiries about this point. I think that they would regard adultery with the wife of an age-mate as worse than ordinary adultery and in the light also of a ritual infringement; but I have no certain evidence about this. 561 835

But it is chiefly at feasts that the age-sets are divided up ceremonially as I have explained above. The *kau* of an animal goes to the *ric matot*, the junior age-set who may eat themselves or may share the meat with the set directly senior to them, according to the seniority of the set to which the owner of the beast belongs. One informant gave me a general example without specifying the seniority of the owner of the animal. He said that at a feast the *kau* would go to the *Lithgac* in Lou country, the *bum* to the *Makeri* and the *juak* to the *Boiloc*. If a *Dangunga* killed the animal we would therefore expect the *Luac* to eat with the *Lithgac*, the *Dangunga* with the *Makeri* and the *Boiloc* by themselves or with any remaining members of the *Thut* set; while if the animal belonged to a *Makeri* we would expect the *Dangunga* to eat with the *Makeri* and the *Luac* with the *Lithgac*. I may have stated this arrangement too rigidly, and even erroneously, as I rely on one or two casual remarks, and it will be necessary to observe actual feasts before one can say for certain how the age-sets are usually divided at them. One informant (Jok) told me that sometimes at a marriage feast the father of the bride will kill a "*yang ric*," "a beast of the age-set," for all the members of his age-set, who would make a special point of coming to the wedding. He said that in this case members of other age-sets would not be provided with meat though they might beg some from the age-mates of the bride's father. 561 574 [585]

One of the actions of the age-set system is the regulation of marriage. In my previous essay I pointed out that the clan is an exogamous group and that any near genealogical relationship through the female line is also a bar to marriage. The *ric*, or age-set, is also the basis of an exogamous group since no man may marry the daughter of an age-set. The reason for this prohibition is found in the convention by which all age-mates are regarded as brothers and, therefore, the children of one are regarded as the children of all, just as the children of a man's brother are his children also. Hence a man speaks of all the children of his age-mates as "my children," and is also barred from marriage with one 561 582

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

which they form a part, though Nuer are not usually particular about the exact moment of their execution. For example, an ox must be sacrificed at a betrothal ceremony and it is usually slaughtered towards the end of the dancing in the evening, but it does not matter if it is sacrificed on the following morning instead. Personal sacrifice may be made at any time if a sudden crisis arises. If it is not acute, people may delay sacrifice till they have discovered its cause with the aid of a prophet or diviner if they suspect that it may be due to something particular, perhaps some sin or the anger of some spirit or ghost. The intention of the offering can then be more precisely formulated. But if the crisis is acute, sacrifice would, whatever opinion, if any, might be held about its cause, be made at once to God. Mgr. Mlakic was clearly recording what he witnessed or heard at the time it happened from a witness when he described how when lightning set fire to a byre its owner entered its flaming interior to save his family and cattle. His first act, however, was to spear a beast of the herd, saying 'God, what do you do to us?' Then he gave his attention to saving people and beasts.[1]

If there is no urgency a sacrifice may be put off till a time convenient for the sacrificer. The collective sacrifices and sacrifices in honour of spirits of one kind or another are normally held in the villages during the rains, and even in cases of sickness, if it is not acute, in dry-season camps Nuer prefer to put off animal sacrifice till they return to their villages. They may consider that though a sickness is due to neglect of some spirit there is no pressing need for immediate sacrifice. To keep the spirit content in the meantime they may sacrifice a cucumber, if they have one, or offer it some tobacco or a libation; or they may make an animal sacrifice in intention by devoting to the spirit then and there an animal by rubbing ashes on its back and then wait till they are back in their permanent homes to sacrifice it. Consequently one rarely sees animal sacrifices in dry-season camps.

A sacrifice is also a feast, and a feast is more suitably held in the surroundings of huts and byres. Nuer, especially the older people, think of the *cieng*, the homestead and village, rather than of the *wec*, the cattle camp, as their home. This is all the more weighty a reason in the case of collective sacrifices, because the kin who should attend them and have rights in the sacrificial flesh may be

[1] Op. cit.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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782 scattered in the drought. There is also plenty of beer and porridge
574 in the rains to add to the meat of the sacrifices for feasting, and
● little or none in the dry-season camps, for even if their millet is not exhausted people are often too far from their granaries to transport it. Moreover, the social activities which are the occasion of collective sacrifices take place, largely because there is plenty of food, in the rains. I think also it is possible that there is more, and more serious, sickness in the rains and hence the greater need for sacrifices then.

782 It does not seem usually to matter at what time of day a sacrifice takes place, though the early morning is preferred on big occasions when oxen are sacrificed; but I have witnessed sacrifices when the sun was high and also in the evening. Early morning and evening are the most convenient times because then the men are at leisure and it is cool, but the early morning has the additional advantage that it gives time for what are sometimes lengthy ceremonies to be performed with slow dignity. I suppose that if there were need Nuer would sacrifice at night, but I have never known this happen, and it would cause certain inconveniences.

There is no particular spot at which the rites must be performed. The ceremony may be held in the space in front of the dwelling-
[778] huts if it is on a domestic scale. This is a suitable place for sacrifice, for a man often erects there a *riek*, post-shrine, and there also is the wife's *buor*, mud wind-screen (Plate V), which also has a certain sacred significance, being the woman's counterpart to the *riek*, as well as serving its practical purpose. But in major sacrifices of the collective type, when there may be many persons present, the sacrifices are likely to be held in the kraal, where there may also be a *riek* (Plate VI), or at its edge, on account of the cattle, or even if they are absent, to avoid the tethering-pegs incommoding those making the invocations. It is not, however, a matter of importance and anywhere convenient will do—properly speaking Nuer have no fanes.[1] It is the same for place as for time. They do not worry about such details. God is at all times and everywhere; there are no specially sacred times and places for sacrifice. Likewise, there are no specially sacred persons who must make sacrifice: any man

[1] God, spirits, and ghosts are associated with the *riek*, which may be in the courtyard, in the kraal, or at the side of the *gol*, the central hearth in the byre, which is the symbol of the family conceived of as a group of agnates and hence of the lineage; and for women, with the *buor*, the symbol of the elementary family, the domestic group.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

782 826 show that human blood has mysterious properties but they do not justify our saying that Nuer regard the life as something contained in the blood. Moreover, in the case of cattle, which is the case at issue, we have to bear in mind that Nuer have no objection to shedding their blood. They do so when they cut their horns, when they castrate them, and when they pierce veins in the necks of cows (*bar*) in the dry season for veterinary purposes or, more usually, to obtain blood for boiling or roasting for their own consumption. But if the blood is not thought of literally as containing the life, the life of a sacrificed ox ebbs with its flow so that Nuer say either that God takes the life (or breath) or that he takes the blood—the blood and the breath being symbols of the life, as also appears to be, in a lesser degree, the chyme.

782 The chyme (*wau*) is what makes the flesh and maintains the life of the beast. Dr. Lienhardt tells me that *wei*, the word for it in Dinka, means in that language also 'life' and 'breath'. It does not appear to have so important a place in Nuer ritual as it has in the ritual of some other Nilotic peoples. The only reference in my notes to its sacramental use in connexion with sacrifice is to its being smeared on a Dinka at his adoption into a Nuer lineage, but Father Crazzolara says that sometimes after sacrifice the head of the family takes some of the chyme and after adding some of the beast's blood and his own spittle he rubs this mixture on his own breast, back of neck, and maybe also forehead, and perhaps also on the same parts of members of his family.[1]

782 574 God takes the *yiegh*, the life. Man takes the *ring*, the flesh, what is left over after the sacrifice. The carcass is cut up and skinned as soon as the animal falls. In most sacrifices the meat is consumed by members of the family and kin of the person on whose behalf it was made. In marriage and most other collective sacrifices it is divided among relatives, both paternal and maternal, in traditional portions; and the age-mates of the owner of the beast and representatives of lineages collateral to his may also have rights to shares. If the principal officiant is not a member of the family or of the close kin but a master of ceremonies of the family or a priest or a prophet, he also receives his share. This part of the proceed-

[1] Op. cit., p. 80. Among the Shilluk, at any rate in their sacrifices to end feuds, the chyme of the victim is put on the youths to indicate unity. A beast eats a bit here and a bit there: in the stomach it becomes one (D. S. Oyler, 'The Shilluk Peace Ceremony', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1920, p. 299).

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

ings is of general interest and not merely for those directly concerned in the rites. If it is at all a public occasion people, whether they are concerned in the matter or not, gather round to watch the meat being cut up and handed to those to whom it is due, and there is often much shouting and argument as the distribution is goodhumouredly disputed and men tug at the carcass and snatch or beg pieces of meat. Even outsiders who get in the way and beg persistently enough are likely to receive pieces of it. According to the circumstances those who on such an occasion receive meat take it to their homes, maybe in different villages, for cooking and eating, or it is cooked by women of the homestead in which the sacrifice took place and eaten there by groups, according to sex, age, and kinship. The meat is cooked, served, and eaten as would be that of a wild beast slaughtered in hunting. It is boiled, though tit-bits may be roasted in the embers of a fire. I want to make it clear indeed that the cutting up of the victim, the preparation of its flesh, and the eating of it are not parts of the sacrifice. To regard the eating of the animal as part of the sacrificial rite would be like regarding a wedding feast as part of the marriage service in our own country. But if it does not form part of the rite and has no sacramental significance it forms part of the whole ceremony in the broader sense and has a social significance. We have always to remember that a sacrifice, even piacular sacrifice, furnishes a feast and that in the circumstances in which Nuer live and by convention this means that neighbours are likely in one way or another to share in it.

IV

The ordinary Nuer sacrifice is carried out in the manner I have described—*pwot*, *buk*, *lam*, *nak* (*kam yang*), presentation, consecration, invocation, immolation. In some sacrifices, however, there are differences of order and procedure.

Mortuary ceremonies open with the slaughter of one or more beasts before sunrise, and as the invocations do not take place till later in the day they are not spoken over the victims as in other sacrifices. I do not think that this reversal of phases has in itself any special significance. Since the cattle have to be killed before the sun rises it is convenient to postpone the invocations, which are very lengthy on this occasion. Moreover, though in the mortuary

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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THE SACRIFICIAL ROLE OF CATTLE

IV

It may be asked how the fact that in piacular sacrifice an ox is substituted for a man affects the general relationship of men to cattle. The answer is that all cattle are reserved for sacrifice. It is not just that in a particular ceremony a particular ox stands for a particular man. The equivalence is a general one between men and cattle. Some caution is necessary here. Nuer are very fond of meat, and whether an animal is killed in sacrifice or dies a natural death its flesh is eaten. All cattle, sheep, and goats, except those sacrificed in holocausts, eventually go into the pot. Also, it is very noticeable that on ceremonial occasions which are not also occasions of calamity, most people show more interest in the festal than in other aspects of the ceremonies. People show their desire for meat without reserve and it is the festal character of sacrifices which gives them much of their significance in the life of the Nuer. This is perhaps most noticeable at weddings, when, moreover, those who get the flesh are not those who sacrifice the animal; and also on those occasions when men scramble for meat. Further, Nuer themselves recognize that some men are too eager to sacrifice an ox, sheep, or goat on the slightest excuse, a craving for meat rather than a pressing need for spiritual aid being the incentive for sacrifice. It is undoubtedly true that it is sometimes craving for meat which reminds a man that sacrifice to some spirit is long overdue, religious obligations providing a ready excuse for a feast. However, the fact that Nuer accuse men of making unnecessary sacrifices to have feasts of meat in itself shows that animals should not be slaughtered except in sacrifice; and there is indeed a very strong feeling, amounting to a moral injunction, that domestic animals—sheep and goats as well as cattle—must not be slaughtered except in sacrifice and, save in very special circumstances, they are never slaughtered for food, a fact noted by Ernst Marno nearly a century ago.[1] This injunction explains why Nuer are not expected to, and do not, provide meat for guests, and also why I was unable to buy beasts from them for food for my own household.

[1] Op. cit., p. 348. The Dinka likewise do not slaughter cattle for food (see that curious book *The Ethiopia Valley*, n.d., pp. 10 and 39, by Hatashil Masha Kathish, a Dinka convert to Christianity). This is the case among many African pastoral peoples.